

Expect.

Employ

Empower.



Alabama
State Rehabilitation Council
2017 Annual Report

*Vocational Rehabilitation Service
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services*



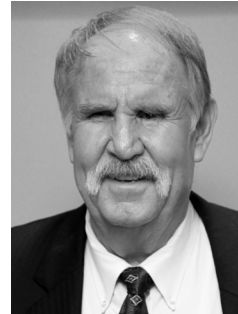


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Expect. **Employ. Empower.**

The State Rehabilitation Council strives to be the voice for persons with disabilities in regards to the services they need to become productive and self-sufficient through gainful employment. With a strong partnership with the Vocational Rehabilitation Service division of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, the SRC addresses the needs of persons with disabilities so they can achieve employment and independence.



This report outlines the SRC's accomplishments in FY2017 in the ongoing effort to have a meaningful impact on the lives of Alabamians with disabilities.

Karl Wade, chairperson
State Rehabilitation Council



The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services has a proud history of ensuring that people with disabilities achieve their maximum potential. The key to the department's success is its relationship with its partners. In FY 2017, the Vocational Rehabilitation Service division of ADRS partnered with the State Rehabilitation Council to provide education and employment-related services to 38,065 Alabamians with disabilities, with 4,633 of those finding employment.

As we enter a new year, I would like to commend SRC members for their commitment to quality service and excellence. At the same time, I challenge both the SRC and ADRS to recommit – both personally and professionally – to working even more diligently in 2018 to ensure that all Alabamians with disabilities have an opportunity to achieve their maximum potential.

Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, commissioner
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services



A unique partnership:

Vocational Rehabilitation Service and the State Rehabilitation Council

In January 1995, as mandated by the Alabama Legislature, Vocational Rehabilitation Service was moved from the State Department of Education to the newly created Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS). This milestone event created a unique partnership between the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the newly named Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services. Working in partnership with ADRS, SRC provides valuable input in administrative codes and rules necessary to regulate Alabama's vocational rehabilitation services.

Working together, the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services and the State Rehabilitation Council strengthen the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services for all Alabamians with disabilities.

The mission of the council is ...

... to provide support and assistance to the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services through program planning, policy development, and delivery of services, thus preparing Alabama's citizens with disabilities for competitive employment.

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
Membership Composition

Mandated Representation	Current Number of Representatives	Number of People with Disabilities	Number of Parents
Commissioner	1	0	0
State Independent Living Council (SILC)	3	3	0
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (State Department of Education)	1	0	0
Client Assistance Program	1	1	1
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	1	0	0
Community Rehabilitation Programs	1	0	0
Business, Industry and Labor	7	0	0
Physical Disabilities	7**	9	1
Cognitive / Learning Disabilities	2	1	1
Sensory Disabilities	4	4	0
Mental Illness	1	1	0
Intellectual Disability	1	1	0
Advocacy Organization	3	3	0
American Indian Program Representative	0	0	0
WIA Representative	1	0	0
Former or Current Recipient of VRS Services	14	14	0
Parent Training Center Representative	1	0	0
Total	49	37*	3

SRC membership consists of persons with disabilities, parents and guardians of persons with disabilities, advocates, service providers, and representatives of the business industry and labor community.

Members are appointed by the governor, and most have a personal interest in ensuring that Alabama's citizens with disabilities receive the services and supports they need to become productive and self-sufficient through gainful employment. Membership is geographically and culturally diverse to assure a broad view into decisions that impact vocational rehabilitation services.

* Actual membership is 30, with some individuals representing more than one category, but includes those who resigned or had their terms expire in 2017. Persons with disabilities comprise a majority (18) of members.

**Does not include sensory disabilities



SRC Functions

- to review and analyze the State Plan and advise ADRS regarding its related responsibilities within the plan
- in partnership with ADRS, to develop and review goals and priorities, evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program, and submit reports of progress to the Rehabilitation Services Administration commissioner
- to advise ADRS regarding authorized activities under the Rehabilitation Act and to assist in preparation of the State Plan and its amendments and in carrying out other requirements of the Rehabilitation Act
- to review and analyze the effectiveness of consumer and other surveys
- to provide for coordination and establishment of working relationships among ADRS, the State Independent Living Council, and independent living centers
- to coordinate council activities with activities of other councils
- to perform other functions consistent with the purpose of the Rehabilitation Act
- to prepare and submit an annual report of council activities to the governor and the ADRS commissioner

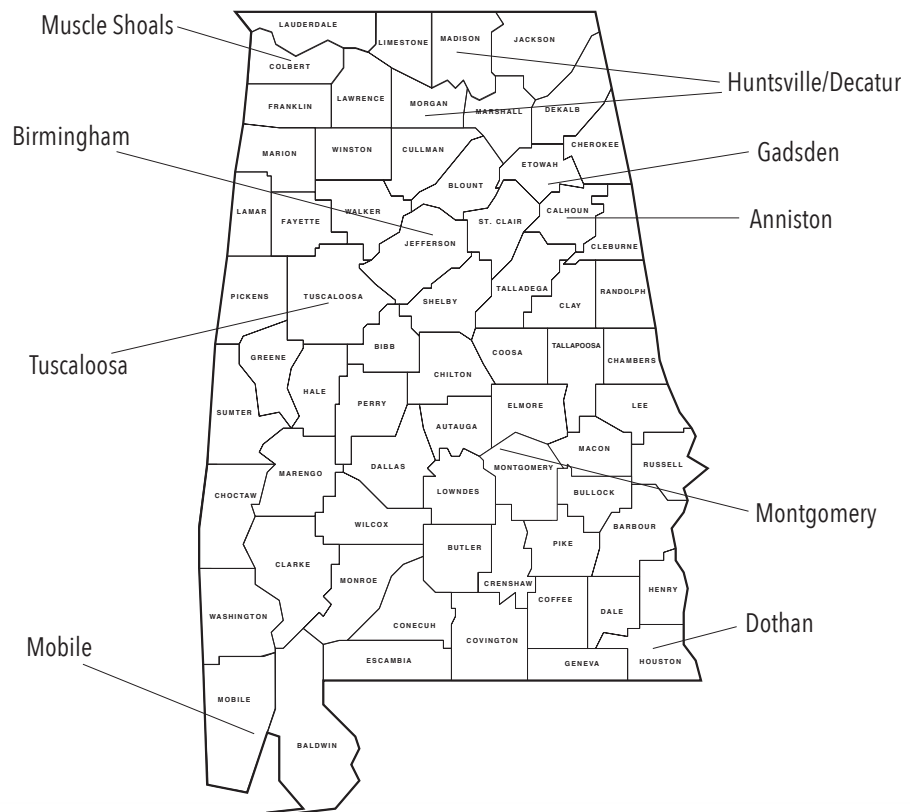
Local advisory councils meet regularly to ensure a voice for consumers at the grassroots level.

In FY 2017, topics of discussion included:

- Updates on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act, including ADA employment provisions (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission settlements), and U.S. Department of Justice settlements
- Continued review of legislative proposals, such as those related to a lemon law for assistive devices; revisions to state accessible parking law (ID on placards or DLs or non-driver IDs, removal of minimum fine sign postage requirement, towing of violators, etc.), State ADA, etc.
- Emergency preparation for people with disabilities, especially hurricane preparations
- Unmet needs of persons with disabilities to provide information to the Governor's Office on Disability
- Healthcare access barriers for individuals with disabilities
- Proposed federal legislation like the ADA Integration Act and the ADA Education and Reform Act (HR 620)
- 2017 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)

These advisory groups continue to increase opportunities to obtain consumer input at the local level and as recruiting grounds for SRC

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SRC performance

The SRC held quarterly meetings on March 14, June 23, Aug. 8, and Oct. 24, 2017. During these meetings, the SRC performed the following functions:

Reviewed and provided input on the consumer satisfaction surveys for blind individuals and their results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made no recommendations for changes to these surveys • Received information on the Blind Services Satisfaction Survey
Reviewed and provided input on the consumer satisfaction surveys for the general VR program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made input as stated below in subcommittee report
Reviewed and provided input on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added questions to the CSNA
Reviewed impartial hearing officer (IHO) List	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received information on hearings conducted during 2017 • Made no recommendations for changes to the list
Reviewed and updated SRC Resource Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed mileage reimbursement from 54 cents to 53.5 cents per mile
Reviewed and provided input on Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended no significant changes when provided information on the agency's CSPD and offered the opportunity to provide input • Notified of current training programs for VR staff and made no significant comments when given the opportunity to provide input • Recommended no significant changes to training programs for VR counselors
Reviewed and provided input on State Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received no comments on the state plan or attachments • Recommended no changes and recommended approval of VR portion of Combined State Plan

Received training and/or information on the following subjects:

- Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) act/accounts
- RSA Business Relations Videos
- Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)
- Alabama Parent Education Training Center (APEC)
- Overview of special blind programs
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Impartial hearing officer list and hearings
- Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)
- Blind consumer satisfaction survey results
- General VR program consumer satisfaction survey results
- VR budget
- VR production (number of VR clients successfully employed)
- ADRS adaptive driving program
- State and federal legislation that may impact VR and its clients
- HB 253 LEAD K
- CRP services and payment restructure
- Update on college tuition policy
- SSA reimbursements
- STAR alternative finance program
- American Freedom Center for the blind

Coordinated council activities with activities of other councils

- Provided annual reports and resource plans to other SRCs upon request
- Attended Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities meetings to share information
- Through the SRC liaison, continued to participate in the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Council conference calls and annual training conferences in April and November 2017

Established working relationships among the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS), the State Independent Living Council (SILC), and independent living centers (ILCs)

- Opened meetings to members of the public, including those of the ILCs or SILC
- Had some SRC members attend SILC meetings and report back to the SRC any significant information
- Had at least one member of the SRC serve as a director of an independent living center
- Had SRC member serve as chair of the SILC and shares information from SILC meetings with SRC members

Performed other functions consistent with the purpose of the Rehabilitation Act

- Asked to give input on changes to the new self-employment policy

SRC subcommittee activities

Executive Subcommittee

Chair: Karl Wade

Vice chair: Jeff Cofield

Members: Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw and subcommittee chairs

Staff Liaison: Graham Sisson

Vision statement: To conduct planning for and administration of SRC meetings

Responsibilities

- Schedule and make arrangements for quarterly meetings
- Plan the SRC agenda
- Report accomplishments
- Nominate officers
- Facilitate appointment of subcommittee chairs and SRC members
- Update SRC Resource Plan
- Assist in preparation of SRC budget
- Plan SRC orientation

Activities

- Scheduled and made arrangements for quarterly meetings, planned the agendas, and reported SRC accomplishments
- Appointed an ad hoc committee to work on the State Plan
- Amended the SRC Resource Plan to decrease the mileage rate to 53.5 cents per mile
- Recommended changes to the bylaws to encourage regular attendance by SRC members
- Appointed new subcommittee chairs for the Membership and Consumer Services/Program Evaluation committees

Business Relations and Employment Subcommittee

Chair: Jeff Cofield

Members: Susan Crow, Guy Dewees, Kenneth Fine, Mickey Hutto, Kathy Lovell, Faye Mansel, Doug Parks, and Wynne Sloane*

Staff Liaison: Peggy Anderson

Vision statement: To enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities and employer satisfaction with VR services

This subcommittee continued to maintain the following priorities:

1. OFCCP Section 503, 7 percent people with disabilities hiring quota for federal contractors
2. Business and labor market trends that parallel or do not parallel consumer goals
3. E-Verify for employers and agency
4. Federal employment issues under Schedule A
5. Department incentives to promote hiring and retention of people with disabilities

The subcommittee also discussed the proposed WIOA regulations for businesses and employers and proposed comments.

This subcommittee made the following recommendations:

1. The applicant pool data in the ABLE Network website should be upgraded
2. The agency should continue to stay engaged in developing Indicator 6 measurements like the RAVE (Retaining a Valued Employee) program and reasonable accommodations
3. The agency should spend Pre-ETS funding on one-day trainings for summer youth employment programs

Activities

- The subcommittee discussed the WIOA regulations for businesses and employers, WIOA Indicator 6 for VR employer services, VR training videos, ABLE network project to update online job listings, Pre-ETS spending for transition, the Talent Acquisition Pool (TAP), the Governor's Disability Job Fair, and CSAVR Business Roundtable.

* resigned in 2017

Legislative/Public Information Subcommittee

Chair: Jack Franklin

Members: Wendy Dean* and Issac Beavers

Staff Liaison: Vacant

Vision statement: To inform SRC members of existing and new legislation which affects the VRS program and people with disabilities and to advocate for legislation, policies, and practices that will enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities

Responsibilities

Same as vision statement above

Activities

- Monitored state and federal legislation that affects individuals with disabilities
- Agreed to continue focus on state funding as a legislative priority
- Continued to work on a list of SRC members who can contact legislators and provided advocacy training to those on this list
- Distributed VR fact sheets to legislators

* resigned in 2017

Consumer Services/Program Evaluation Subcommittee

Chair: Dr. Marie Kraska

Members: Issac Beavers, Scott Besong, Jon Brock, Wendy Dean*, Tim Emmons, Susan Goldthwaite, John Harris, Rachel Hughes, George Neal, Patrick Robinson, Tom Schwarz, Chris Tidwell, Zarius Walker**

Staff Liaison: Michael Quinn

Vision statement: To enhance consumer satisfaction with services, service providers, and employment and to assist VRS in developing and implementing strategies to ensure consumer satisfaction

Responsibilities

- Facilitate council review of the agency's consumer satisfaction survey and results
- Collaborate with the agency in conducting the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment every three years

Activities

- Reviewed Blind Consumer Satisfaction Survey and its results
- Made no recommendations or changes to existing blind survey
- Continued to work with Auburn University to report FY 2016 survey of the general VR program
- Provided input on the FY 2016 survey format and recommended that the survey be adopted and used for the general VR program with no major changes
- Received additional information on proposal for peer support specialists for mental health consumers
- Added questions to the 2017 CSNA

* resigned in 2017

** removed in 2017

SRC subcommittee activities

Membership/Nomination Subcommittee

Chair: Wendy Dean*

Members: Logan Davis and Jack Franklin

Staff Liaison: Graham Sisson

Vision statement: To maintain SRC membership so that it meets federal law and enables the SRC to perform its duties

Responsibilities

- Maintain current membership list
- Recruit new members to fill vacancies
- Secure re-appointments of existing members, where eligible
- Assist in orientation of new members
- Assist in identifying training needs of SRC members

Activities

- Through the SRC liaison, updated the SRC list on the Alabama secretary of state's website
- Facilitated reappointment of eligible members
- Nominated members to fill vacancies and facilitated their appointments
- Gave update on SRC membership at most SRC meetings

** Wendy Dean resigned in 2017, and Tom Schwarz appointed new chair*

Bylaws Revision Subcommittee

Chair: Logan Davis

Members: Logan Davis and Jack Franklin

Staff Liaison: Graham Sisson

Vision statement: To maintain SRC bylaws so that they are consistent with federal law and allow for smooth operation of the SRC

Responsibilities

- Monitor effectiveness of bylaws
- Recommend any necessary changes on an annual basis

Activities

- Continued to monitor the effectiveness of the bylaws
- Recommended new membership attendance requirements to the bylaws in FY 2017

Deaf Advisory Subcommittee

Chair: Patrick Robinson

Staff Liaison: Bedarius Bell

Vision statement: To inform the SRC and the VR agency of issues or input for the VR program for people who are deaf

Responsibilities

- Report on issues of individuals who are deaf and assist in the development of a strategic plan for people who are deaf

Activities

- Informed SRC members of issues in the deaf community, including interpreter licensing issues and shortage, and activities in the deaf community
- Continued to recommend that ADRS make strong efforts to encourage interpreting as a vocation due to shortage of interpreters

Blind Advisory Subcommittee

SRC Liaison: Issac Beavers

Staff Liaison: Dana Barber

Vision statement: To inform the SRC and the VR agency of issues or input for the VR program for people who are blind or visually impaired

Responsibilities

- Report on issues of individuals who are blind and visually impaired and assist in the development of a strategic plan for people who are blind or visually impaired

Activities

- Informed SRC members of the results of the blind surveys
- Shared minutes of the Blind Advisory meeting



2017 highlights



1,056

businesses receiving no-cost services

(including recruitment assistance and disability management, training, and employee retention services, with a special emphasis on federal contractor businesses)

21

*community VRS offices
strategically located
throughout the state*



1,752

*Consumers receiving one-
on-one services from ADRS
business relations consultants*

(to ensure their "job readiness" and to facilitate their employment in the public and private sector)

4,633

consumers placed in employment



38,065

VR consumers served

2017 CSNA Overview

The 2017 SRC Needs Assessment Survey was conducted by the Alabama State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) in coordination with the Governor's Office on Disability (GOOD), and was produced in accordance with the 2014 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act that require the representation of multiple stakeholder perspectives in a triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). This survey serves as one of several sources of input to the overall 2017 CSNA.

The purpose of the 2017 SRC Needs Assessment Survey, consistent with prior iterations, was to ask Alabamians with disabilities about unmet needs that they have encountered in the course of their path to greater self-determination and employment. The survey consisted of 15 questions, 10 of which were demographic in nature and five that solicited input about unmet needs or other challenges. The primary survey delivery method was the internet; a link was provided through email distribution lists and social media outlets. As in prior years, an alternate (print) version of the survey was made available and distributed through multiple channels.

Responses to the 2017 SRC Needs Assessment Survey were submitted anonymously by 218 Alabamians with disabilities from June through October 2017. Survey participation declined 30 percent from 2014 levels. Solicitations to participate in this year's survey had the unfortunate circumstance of being timed alongside multiple national news stories of ransom-ware and malware events encountered by individuals clicking links within emails. It is believed that news of these outbreaks deterred some would-be participants. In the 2014 survey, 85 percent of respondents participated online. In 2017, the majority of responses were from print versions, with only 42 percent of respondents completing the survey online.

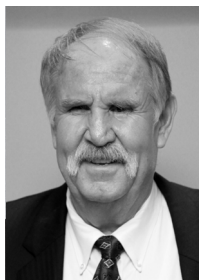
The survey covers the four following topics:

- *Needs of Alabamians with the most-significant disabilities*
- *Needs of minorities with disabilities*
- *Needs of unserved and underserved persons with disabilities*
- *Needs of students with disabilities and their need for Pre-ETS*

According to the survey, the top 20 unmet needs are:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Transportation | 10. Placement into a job |
| 2. Job readiness training | 11. Assistive technology, devices, or software |
| 3. Assistance obtaining job interviews | 12. Assistance arranging accommodations/disclosing a disability |
| 4. Independent living skills training or assistance | 13. Financing for self-employment |
| 5. Advice on potential loss of benefits (including SSI/SSDI) | 14. Mental health services |
| 6. More timely service from vocational rehabilitation staff | 15. Medical devices or equipment |
| 7. Medication | 16. Transition-focused resources |
| 8. Long-term, on-the-job supports | 17. Work-related supplies or tools |
| 9. Tuition assistance | 18. Personal care assistance |
| | 19. Treatment for substance abuse |
| | 20. Interpreter services |

SRC membership



Karl Wade
Chair, consumer
Prattville



Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw
Commissioner
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services
Montgomery



Consumer
Timothy Alexander
Birmingham



Consumer
Issac Beavers
Huntsville



Parent
Scott Besong
Auburn



Consumer
Jon Brock
Birmingham



Employer
Jeff Cofield
Alabama Power
Birmingham



Consumer/CIL Representative
Kent Crenshaw
Montgomery
(rotated off Aug. 31, 2017)



Employer/CRP Representative
Susan Crow
Workshops Inc.
Birmingham



Consumer
Logan Davis
Heflin



Consumer
Wendy Dean
Opelika
(resigned 2017)



Employer
Guy Dewees
Jefferson County Personnel Board
Birmingham



Consumer
Tim Emmons
Montgomery



Labor
Kenneth Fine
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
Birmingham

SRC membership



Consumer/SILC Representative
Jack Franklin
Vina



Special Education
Susan Goldthwaite
State Department of Education
Montgomery



Consumer
John Harris
Dothan



SACAP Representative
Rachel Hughes
State of Alabama
Client Assistance Program
Montgomery



WIA Board Representative
Mickey Hutto
Montgomery



Program Evaluation Representative
Dr. Maria Kraska
Auburn



Employer
Kathy Lovell
Regions Bank
Birmingham



Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
Faye Mansel
Vocational Rehabilitation Service
Montgomery



Consumer
George Neal
Montgomery
(rotated off Aug. 31, 2017)



Employer
Doug Parks
HD Supply
Calera



Consumer
Patrick Robinson
Talladega



Consumer/Veteran
Tom Schwarz
Semmes

SRC membership demographics



Employer
Wynne Sloane
Montgomery
(resigned 2017)



Consumer
Chris Tidwell
Tuscaloosa
(rotated off in 2017)



Consumer
Zarius Walker
Montgomery
(removed in 2017)



Parent Training Center Representative
Jeana Winter
Alabama Parent Education Center
Wetumpka



SRC Conflict of Interest Policy

Statement of Policy

No member of the council shall cast a vote on any matter that would provide direct financial benefit to the member or the member's organization or otherwise give the appearance of a conflict of interest under state law. 34 CFR Part 361.17 (g). When conflicts of interest are identified, the council member to whom the conflict applies must abstain from voting on the issue causing the conflict.

Required Disclosure

Each council member shall disclose orally or in writing all conflicts of interest, including those which are unclear or potential. Such disclosure shall be made to the chairperson of the council.

Effective Date

This Conflict of Interest Policy shall become effective immediately upon approval by a majority of the council. Upon such approval, this policy is incorporated by reference into the council bylaws.

Approved: November 29, 2000

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AND THANKS FOR A JOB WELL DONE TO FORMER MEMBERS:

*Kent Crenshaw, Wendy Dean, George Neal,
Wynne Sloane, and Chris Tidwell*

Prepared by:



Alabama Department of
REHABILITATION SERVICES

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw

Commissioner

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